

THE STUDY OF SCHILLER.

In the study of Schiller, I sat down one morning at his desk, and with ink dipped from an inkstand of Goethe, I took phrenological notes on a cast of Schiller's head. There was a seat and an occupation! But nothing is complete in this loose, fragmentary world. Why was there no mould from the cranium of Schiller's renowned friend? Because men are such laggards behind truth. The momentous, brilliant discovery of the physiology of the brain was promulgated in the beginning of this century, and first in Germany, by its great discoverer, Gall. And, still, though so easily verified, it remains unacknowledged by scientific men on the continent of Europe. In freer England, and freest America, its truth has been forced upon the scientific in a great measure by the enlightened perseverance of the laity. Goethe, whose sympathy with the spirit and processes of Nature was the source of his wisdom, meeting with Gall, who, in a tour through Germany, was expounding his newly-made discovery, received it at once into his mind, with that large hospitality which he always extended to new-comers from the realms of Nature. Pity that he had not cultivated acquaintanceship into intimacy. His name would have been a passport to this fruitful truth, and thus have hastened by half a century its acceptance among his countrymen. In that case, moreover, his friends and excoctors, knowing the scientific value of a fac-simile of his noble head, we should have had his by the side of Schiller's, to compare together and contrast the two.

The brain of Schiller, from its large size and general conformation, denotes uncommon energy, great force and warmth of character, and irresistible mental momentum. In his organization there was a rich mingling of powers. What he undertook he went at with a zeal that rallied his whole nature to the service, with a volume of impetus that bore him onward with burning velocity, and with a resolution that no obstacle could stay. His undertakings were high, his aspirations noble. Onward, onward, upward, upward! might have been his device. With all this fiery enthusiasm, this impatient activity, he undertook nought rashly. He was at once impetuous and prudent. He was self-confident, but with consciousness of his gifts he united an insatiable thirst for better than he could furnish. His ideal was so exalted it kept him ever learning and expanding. Goethe was often astonished, when they would meet after a not very long separation, to find what progress he had made in the interval. His intellect was under the spur of his poetic expansions fed by his hearty impulses. His mind was kept at red heat. His nature was earnest, and even stern. If there was in him no sportive-ness or humor, neither was there any littleness. His love of fame was strong, but he sought to gratify it by lofty labors.

Schiller's intellect was broad and massive, not subtle nor penetrative. Hence, with all his material of sympathy and inborn passion, wherewith he energized and diversified his characters, they lack individuality and compactness. In the most finished there is a certain hollowness. It is not so much, that they are not distinctly enough dif-

ferenced one from the other, as that each is not tightly knit up into itself, as in Shakespeare and Goethe. Schiller was not the closest, most scrupulous thinker, and thence in creating characters he could not thoroughly interpenetrate the animal and sentimental vitality with the intellectual, which interpenetration must be in order that each personage have his definite, rounded, vivacious existence. Nor is the action in his dramatic structures always bound up in the severest logical chain. Schiller was not a Poet of the highest order; he was not prophetic, not a *vates*. He did not deliver truths, or embody beauty in creations, so much above the standard of his age that they have to wait for a higher culture to be fully valued. His generalizations have not the unflinching brilliancy which those truths have that are wrought in the mine of emotion by the intensest action of reason. Between his intellect and his sensibility there was not that perfect accord which makes the offspring of their union at once veracious and ideal, and elastic from the compactness of their constituents. His grasp of intellect was not so strong as was his imaginative swing. When the cast was first put into my hands, what first struck me was the want of prominence in the upper part of the forehead.

Speaking of his early flight from Wurtemberg, Schiller describes the joy he felt in having thenceforward no other master than the Public. To an ardent young Poet it could not be but a joy, akin to that of moral renovation, to escape from the suffocation of tyranny, to find himself rid of a narrow King, and face to face with the broad multitude. But there is a still higher Tribunal,—through which, too, the Public is in the end more surely and permanently won than by direct appeal to itself,—the tribunal of Truth. To this and this alone the true Artist feels himself amenable. For, the Artist's function is, to purify the sensibility of his fellow-men, to instruct them by awakening a poetic admiration, to chasten their taste. By creations in harmony with the absolute true and beautiful, he develops and cultivates the latent æsthetic capability of the mass. His part is to be a teacher, not a flatterer or prosaic purveyor. Great Artists are always above their Public. Did Shakespeare suit himself to the common judgment of his day? So little so, that even the shrewdest of his contemporaries discerned not half the meaning and merit of his wonderful creations. He himself,—sublime isolation,—was the only one of his time who knew their transcendent worth. To think, that for more than a century there was in the whole world but one man who entirely enjoyed the Tempest and Lear, who was capable of fully loving Imogen and Juliet, and that man was Shakespeare. What kind of appeal to the general judgment of Charles the Second's generation was *Paradise Lost*? Wordsworth scorned the Public, who laughed at him, and having survived a half-century his earlier Poems, had the personal enjoyment of a tardy justice, his genius being acknowledged by a more "enlightened Public" than that which first so coldly greeted him, his later contemporaries paying him reverence as a true Priest in the service of Beauty and Truth. He had to make the taste by which he was appre-

ciated. Goethe, mentioning in a letter to Schiller, the limited sale of one of his best Poems, *Hermann and Dorothea*, comforts himself by adding ironically,—“we make money by our bad books.” And Schiller himself, who always wrote in pursuit of a refined ideal, says somewhere, that the Artist’s mission is to scourge rather than to truckle to the spirit of his age.

It is much for a man to possess several eminent qualities that keep him on a high level. Schiller was upborne by his poetic nature and his love of humanity. He had not the deepest sensibility for truth. Thus, although, under his poetic and generous inspirations, he appreciated and practically fulfilled the Artist’s function, his impulse when first freed was towards fame. From the same source,—that is, the absence of arched rotundity in the region of conscientiousness,—I would infer a want of punctuality in engagements, literary and other, and venture to conjecture, that by this failing his friend Goethe was occasionally somewhat put out.

Among the precious relics was the bedstead whereon Schiller slept, and whereon he died, at the early age of forty-six. Often, at night, he put his feet into a tub of cold water, placed under his writing-table, in order thereby to keep himself awake. He worked his brain to the uttermost, and wore himself out with the noblest labor. It were easy to figure him seated at his desk, with “visionary eye,” and furrowed brow, intently elaborating thoughts which his pen hurriedly seized, when a knock, drawing from him an unwilling “Herein,” he would lift his eyes with a look of almost sternness, for the unwelcome interrupter; and then suddenly his countenance would relax and beam, as the tall figure of Goethe advanced through the opening door, and rising with an eager motion, he would greet his friend with cordial words and hand-grasp. And the fever of his mind would subside. The calm power of the self-possessing Goethe would soothe him without lowering his tone; and when, after Goethe’s departure, he set himself again to his work, it would be with the refreshed feeling of one who, towards the close of a mid-summer’s day, has just bathed in the shady nook of a deep, tranquil stream.—*Scenes and Thoughts in Europe, by Calvert.*